

### Source 3: Early lifeboat stations

One of the earliest pieces of evidence proving the existence of a boat kept on the coast at Formby for the sole purpose of saving lives at sea is an extract from the Liverpool Common Council meeting on 2 April 1777.

Although the boat was not at that time called a 'lifeboat', Formby was, nevertheless, credited as being one of the first lifeboat stations. The extract shows how Liverpool Town Council funded an organised system of rescue from shipwreck at the mouth of the River Mersey.

As the second busiest port in Britain at the time, Liverpool was pioneering in the area of lifesaving at sea. For example, Dr Thomas Houlston set up the Liverpool Institution for Recovering Drowned Persons in 1775. Like the Royal Humane Society based in London (established in 1774 and then called the Society for the Recovery

of Persons Apparently Drowned), this organisation aimed to retrieve and resuscitate victims of drowning with specially trained medical assistants and also provided payments to bystanders who rescued them. William Hutchinson, the Liverpool Dock Master and Water Bailiff (1759–93), was another man influencing Liverpool's humane movement. His text, *A Treatise on Practical Seamanship* (1777), promoted safe navigation and rescues to ships in distress.

Such schemes and books intended to confront the British public with the inhumanity of leaving others to die at sea.

It is thought that Sir William Hillary, who campaigned to set up the National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck (now the RNLI), would have been aware of these Liverpool schemes for lifesaving at sea.

*It is Ordered, that Richard Scarisbrick of Formby tailor, be appointed to take care of the Boat and Boat House erected and provided to be built and Stationed at Formby, to assist and save Shipwrecked persons and Goods on this Coast; And that M<sup>r</sup> Gerrard do pay him the sum of five Guineas for the good Services by him already done herein; and that he have a Salary of two Guineas a year from henceforth for such Service: And that he and the Boats Crew shall be handsomely rewarded hereafter for any good Services done herein not less than one Guinea per head for every Life or person they shall save, and to be further rewarded as the Council shall on Enquiry find he or they merit, to be paid out of the Dock Duties.*

Minute from the Liverpool Common Council meeting on 2 April 1777  
Courtesy: Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool Libraries

*It is ordered that Richard Scarisbrick of Formby, sailor, be appointed to take care of the Boat and Boat House erected and provided to be built and stationed at Formby to assist and save shipwrecked persons and goods on this Coast. And that Mr. Gerrard do pay him the sum of five guineas [£5.25] for the good services by him already done herein and that he have a salary of two guineas [£2.10] a year from henceforth for such service and that he and the Boat's crew shall be handsomely rewarded hereafter for such good service done herein and that not less than one guinea [£1.05] per head for every Life or person they shall save and to be further rewarded as the Council shall on enquiry find he or they merit to be paid out of the Dock Duties.*

Transcript of the above minute  
Courtesy: Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool Libraries

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1. What does the minute from the Liverpool Common Council meeting tell us?
2. What arguments are there for and against saving lives at sea?
3. Would you need an incentive to risk your life to save others? If yes, what type of incentive would you need? If not, what reasons would you have to do this?